Copy - please

7/13/72

Dear Howard,

Let me start out by saying that I had no intention of smearing or misrepresenting you in my letter of 7/6. If I misrepresented things you had told me or that I felt you had implied it was not done deliberately and I apologise.

I also concede that it probably wasn't my place to send the death certificate to Sylvia. I had discussed the matter with her, and because I trust both Sylvia and her judgment I took it upon myself to send her a copy. Perhaps from an ethical standpoint that was an improper decision. Perhaps, also, I should have told Harold I had done it. But frankly I acted out of instinct, feeling (as I still feel) that Sylvia should see the document, and knowing how Harold would react knowing that either Sylvia or Wecht had seen it. I don't think that I was acting out of a feeling of omniscience or that I saw myself as a savior. I did what it seemed to me ought to be done. I realize that this requires assessing things from a somewhat subjective and less that completely knowledgeable point of view, but I don't think that there are too many people who could honestly say that they operate differently. I would also be less than honest if I told you that given another opportunity I would have done any differently except that I probably would have told Harold what I was doing and accepted the consequences rather than hope that he wouldn't find out.

If my "none of your business" was defensive, I think that the "your request" was just a little bit defensive also. When I called you it was to try to urge you to brief Wecht (and that's a matter that I don't want to pursue further because we're dealing with translations of what one third party said to another third party, and I'm sure that something is getting lost in the translation). I didn't want to discuss the Burkley matter because I was a bit miffed that you had called Harold with only one side rather than call me (collect if you had wished) to at least try to get the full story. I can't fault you for telling Harold, but I would have preferred for you to have confronted me first. My reason for sending you a copy of my letter to Harold was exactly what I said it was in my last letter to you (in fact, the first paragraph of that letter was partially aimed at you as well as Harold). I mentioned to you in our phone conversation that I had sent you a copy because I felt that it would be difficult to pursue an unrelated conversation with no reference to what had transpired re the death certificate. But whether or not you detected it in my voice, I was a bit angry and was not in the mood to discuss the matter. I think that I probably did invite you to call me back and discuss the matter after you received the letter. I don't remember specifically requesting you to do so, but I may have. At any rate, your reply was angry and emotional, and I think quite arrogant, and I doubt that you composed it at "my request."

I want to reiterate that I didn't deliberately misrepresent anything in my last letter to you. I'm glad that you set the record straight, and I'm sorry if I made some subjective interpretations. I sent copies of your letter and my reply only to Sylvia and Gary, and I'm sending both of them a copy of your reply. I'm not interested in distorting anyone's position or feeding my own ego.

With regard to your last paragraph, I've tried to tell you honestly and seriously why I did what I did. On that subject I don't know what to add to what I've already said.

Best,

Jerry

cc: Gary, Sylvia

P.S. I didn't say in my letter to you that I called Lifton as a last resort so that you would head him off. What I said was that I told you I had called Lifton because I hoped you would head him off. If Lifton has done some irresponsible things he is still very knowledgeable about this case. I don't enjoy playing people off against each other, and I think perhaps that's what I've done here without meaning to. I have a lot of respect for your knowledge of this case. Wecht deserves the benefit of your knowledge. He also deserves the benefit of the knowledge of anyone else who has done extensive work and is willing to share it with him. I'm sorry I termed Lifton a last resort because I have no right to classify him as such. I also have no business attempting to get anybody to head off anybody else.

I don't think that Wecht intends to rush in to see the autopsy material which may explain why he hasn't gotten in touch with you as yet. At any rate I realize that I don't belong in the middle of this so I won't interfere any further or attempt any more mediation.